

I Claim:

1. An apparatus for synchronously removing a coverlay film from an adhesive film and attaching an adhesive strip cut from the adhesive film to a support element, comprising:

5 a reel of adhesive film;

a drive wheel assembly positioned downstream of the reel of adhesive film and configured to index the adhesive film;

a pinch wheel assembly positioned immediately above and adjacent to the drive wheel assembly, the pinch wheel assembly operable in conjunction with
10 the drive wheel assembly to remove the coverlay film from the adhesive film;

a cutter assembly positioned downstream of the drive wheel assembly and the pinch wheel assembly, the cutter assembly comprising an opening having a peripheral outline defined by a cutting blade and a side rail, the opening configured to receive a leading terminal end of adhesive from the adhesive film
15 and a portion of the adhesive following the leading terminal end, and a channel configured to guide the adhesive into the opening; and

a cutting block configured to move through the opening to cut adhesive strips from the adhesive received within the opening and to apply the adhesive strip to the support element, the cutting block and the adhesive strip having the
20 peripheral outline of the opening.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising an idler assembly positioned downstream of the drive wheel assembly and the pinch wheel assembly, the idler assembly configured to push or pull the adhesive film as needed to
25 eliminate or add slack to the adhesive film before the coverlay film is removed therefrom.

3. An method for synchronously removing a coverlay film from an adhesive film and attaching an adhesive strip cut from the adhesive film to a support
30 element, comprising:

removing adhesive film from a reel;

feeding a portion of the adhesive film through a drive wheel assembly positioned downstream of the reel;

indexing the adhesive film;

removing the coverlay film from the adhesive film using a pinch wheel

- 5 assembly positioned immediately above and adjacent to the drive wheel assembly and operating in conjunction therewith;

feeding a leading terminal end of adhesive from the adhesive film and the indexed portion of the adhesive following the leading terminal end onto a cutting block of a cutter assembly after the coverlay film is removed from the

- 10 adhesive film; and

reciprocating the cutting block through an opening to cut adhesive strips from the adhesive received within the opening and applying the adhesive strip to the support element.